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ABSTRACT

Guidelines and case studies of model programs are intended as resource materials to aid 22 organizations funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to encourage meaningful youth participation in policy decisions which affect youth, primarily in the juvenile justice, educational, and social systems. The first of three major parts briefly discusses why youth participation is essential, what youth gain from participation, and the key elements of youth participation. The second part provides practical guidelines for program implementation on organizational commitment, qualities of youth organizers, recruitment, incentives, getting youth interested in advocacy, developing commitment, training, skills, and opportunities for learning. The third part, comprising over half of the publication, describes a variety of advocacy activities that young people have handled successfully in actual projects developed to respond to local needs using local resources. They publish newspapers; produce handbooks, comic books, and guides; produce radio shows; and negotiate with public officials, and develop legislation. (RM)

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YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN YOUTH ADVOCACY

A Practical Guide for Developing Programs

SP014108

A publication of the National Commission on Resources for Youth prepared for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention of the U.S. Department of Justice.

Peter Kleinbard, NCRY Executive Director

January 1982

This material was prepared by the National Commission on Resources for Youth (NCRY) as part of its project to provide assistance to the twenty-two Youth Advocacy grantees of the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). Part of the information for this *Guide* was compiled under United States Department of Justice LEAA Grant #78-JN-0035-s-1 to the Institute of Urban Studies at the University of Notre Dame; financial assistance from the Joyce Foundation of Chicago, Illinois, also helped in the preparation. The views expressed are not necessarily those of the U.S. Department of Justice or the Joyce Foundation.

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PREFACE

TRANSFORMATION IN YOUTH SERVICES

Youth services at this time are undergoing a profound transformation in the scale and sources of support. Many services will be re-evaluated, discontinued, or reduced. It is especially important now to involve young people in shaping these changes. Actual programs in which youth plan, evaluate, or monitor services are described in this booklet. The program descriptions suggest ways young people can be involved in influencing youth services and the attitudes of adults in decision making roles. The programs show that, when given the chance, young people can make a significant contribution to advocacy.

In the Spring of 1980 the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) awarded grants to twenty-two organizations to bring about improvements in youth services through advocacy. Advocacy was defined as "a process whereby the administration of juvenile justice, social service and education can be improved through the active support and representation of youth interests and needs."[1] One of the major themes of the program was youth involvement, defined as "meaningful youth participation in policy decisions affecting youth for the purpose of better defining youth needs and impacting on the practices, policies, and utilization of funds in youth serving institutions."[2]

The National Commission on Resources for Youth (NCRY) was asked to assist the grantees in planning and implementing the Youth Participation component of their projects. NCRY was established in 1967 to foster more active and significant social roles for young people - what NCRY calls Youth Participation. It has documented more than 1500 Youth Participation programs and trained more than 5000 staff persons in how to establish programs. NCRY's definition of Youth Participation was cited in the OJJDP announcement of its Advocacy Program. Youth Participation is defined as "involving youth in responsible, challenging action that meets genuine needs with opportunity for planning and/or decision-making affecting others, in an activity whose impact or consequences extends to others."

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[1] See Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (1979) page 3.

[2] *Ibid*, p. 3.

[3] *Ibid*, p. 12.

In addition, NCRY emphasizes the importance of critical reflection by the young people on the work activity and of collaboration with adults.

SERVICE AND ADVOCACY

In many programs of Youth Participation young people *provide service:* Youth Tutoring Youth, Youth Counseling Youth, Youth Helpers in Day Care. The directness and immediacy of helping someone are important and refreshing to young people who have few opportunities to take action that has direct and visible positive consequences. But advocacy presents a different objective for youth participants and a more complex process of involvement. Advocacy tasks are usually slow to bring tangible consequences. Often, adult advocates are not trained or experienced in work with young people. Thus, the Advocacy Program of OJJDP presented a new challenge.

In developing resources for the grantees, NCRY first sought out models of effective Youth Participation in advocacy. Of the more than 100 programs studied, nineteen were identified as models. NCRY visited them, met with staff and youth participants, and documented their practices in case studies that are summarized in this booklet. NCRY staff also helped the advocacy grantees and other advocacy projects to integrate Youth Participation in their work. These efforts were reviewed by experienced youth workers, including youth, in an Idea Exchange on Youth Participation in Youth Advocacy, held in Chicago in June of 1981. The results of that conference and the case studies are integrated here. We present this material with some modesty because including Youth Participation in the work of advocacy organizations is often difficult. We hope that readers will report to us on their experiences so that together we may continue to build our knowledge in this important area.

YOUTH PARTICIPATION IS DIFFICULT

Finally, we ask readers to remember that "models" such as we present here are not meant to be imitated whole. These programs may provide confirmation to some practitioners that they are on the right track and suggest new directions to others. Still others will need to experiment with entirely new approaches. Some of these pioneers will provide the models for tomorrow. It is useful and wise to be aware of the work of other practitioners but not be bound by it.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people participated in the development of this booklet. A full description of their contributions would be a booklet in itself, but we should like to mention them briefly.

Young people and adult practitioners in the twenty-two Youth Advocacy projects funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) contributed by sharing their ideas and experiences as they struggled with the problems of adapting Youth Participation to their work. The OJJDP staff helped to keep us on track by reiterating frequently and forcefully their commitment to Youth Participation: Travis Cain, Kathie Costin, Emily Martin, William Modzeleski, David West, and our Project Officer, Constance Walton. NCRY's work on this project was conducted under a subcontract with Notre Dame University's Institute of Urban Studies (IUS). Dr. Thomas Broden, the Director of IUS, was the best of supervisors, always encouraging us and helping to facilitate our work.

Staff persons of the projects described in the handbook generously took on the task of helping us to understand their projects. One of the most important stages in the creation of this booklet was the Idea Exchange on Youth Participation in Youth Advocacy, held at the University of Chicago in June, 1981. The participants helped to formulate many of the ideas presented here. Participants were:

Laurie Olsen
Open Road
San Francisco, CA

Paul Weckstein
Center for Law and Education
Washington, DC

Gary Leofanti
Aunt Martha's Youth Service Center
Park Forest, IL

Kathy Jarvis
Advocates for Children of New York, Inc.
Long Island City, NY

Keith Hefner
Youth Communication/ New York Center
New York, NY

Sharon Weitzman
Designs for Change
Chicago, IL

Linda Combs
formerly of the Youth Network Council
Chicago, IL

Trent Adkins
formerly of the Youth Network Council
Chicago, IL

Carolyn Jabs
National Commission on Resources for Youth
New York, NY

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Peter Kleinbard
Executive Director

January 1982

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INTRODUCTION

By Kathie Costin
Office of Juvenile Justice
& Delinquency Prevention

YOUTH ARE EXCLUDED

The role of American youth has changed significantly over the past few decades. In the past, it was customary - and necessary - that youth be enlisted as strategic and productive members of the family, the community, and the work force. But since then, our country's level of technology has increased, families have become fragmented, schooling has been lengthened, and child labor laws have been enacted, all of which have tended to exclude youth from the activities of the adult world. The youth of today mature earlier than did their predecessors, and they are acquiring sophisticated knowledge at a much earlier age. The period of adolescence, in which a youth is no longer a child but not yet accepted as an adult, has been prolonged.

Even though adolescence is a transitional state into adulthood, the young people who are in this state need, no less than adults, to feel that they are accepted members of their communities. Young people who do not have access to personally gratifying social roles often experience frustration and alienation. And they may vent these feelings through delinquent behavior, dropping out of school, truancy, drug and alcohol abuse, school violence and vandalism, and running away from home.

Adults generally show little understanding of the plight of adolescents. Rather than trying to change the situations that encourage frustrations of youth, our society has traditionally pointed to the victims of those situations - the youth - and blamed them for failing to remain law-abiding and become productive.

Well-intentioned adults have devised many strategies for preventing delinquency. These strategies commonly attempt to change an individual's nonconforming behavior through the provision of services such as counseling, recreational opportunities, or jobs. And while such programs may enhance the well-being of the children they serve, they rarely cause a reduction in juvenile delinquency rates.

MOST YOUTH ARE NOT DELINQUENT

Rather than focusing on those young persons whom adults believe to be deviant, it would be more profitable to concentrate on the reasons that most youth are able to stay out of trouble and most youth become productive adults. Those reasons will provide a basis for sound delinquency prevention programming which will be applicable to all youth.

BONDING THEORY

There are many theoretical perspectives on delinquency prevention. Those most frequently cited are bonding, social learning, cultural deviance, strain and labeling theories. There does not exist a single explanation of why delinquency occurs. However, bonding theory has received the most empirical support[1] and it seems to provide the most promising strategies for development of delinquency prevention programs.

Young people need a sense of belonging and need to feel competent, influential, and useful. They want to be viewed favorably by the persons that matter to them - their families, neighbors, peers, teachers, and employers. Bonding theory posits that most young people stay out of trouble most of the time when they can form a bond with the conventions of society, primarily through their affiliations with family members, schools, church and workplace. There are four aspects to this bonding process:

- Commitment - having an interest or stake in something that misconduct would jeopardize.
- Attachment - to other people, so that violation of their expectations would cause the young person distress.
- Involvement - ongoing investment of time and energy in conventional activities.
- Belief - in the moral validity of the rules that a young person is asked to obey.[2]

ROLES FOR YOUTH

In order to allow this bonding process to occur, society must provide youth with access to socially acceptable, responsible and personally gratifying

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[1] See Weis and Sederstrom (1981) page 51.

[2] See Johnson, *et al*, (1981) pages 89-91.

social roles. Young people are not in a position to create these roles by themselves. They must be created by communities, schools, and families, as well as by the social establishments with which youth come into contact.

The most defensible delinquency prevention strategies, therefore, are those that offer opportunities for a youth's involvement in conventional activities and interaction with members of the community. They increase the potential for all youth to have proper social development. They attempt to change those situations that inhibit bonding. Their objective is to change socialization patterns prior to the initial occurrence of delinquent behavior rather than to treat the behavior manifestations of a selected population of troublesome youth.

SCHOOLS

While the family is the primary unit of socialization for preteen youth, the school takes over once a child reaches adolescence. Because of this fact, our school systems have responsibility to provide for the social as well as the cognitive development of children. Many policies and practices of schools unintentionally discourage the proper socialization of youth. Schools generally stress control and rigidity rather than promoting self-expression and responsibility, and they often fail to prepare a youth for the transition into adulthood. The result of such policies and practices is evidenced by reports of high levels of crime and violence in our nation's schools. NIE also found that there are approximately 157,000 illegal acts committed in schools in a typical month.[3] Estimates of the cost of these crimes range as high as $600 million annually.

But the school is not the only social institution whose organizational structure often denies a youth appropriate opportunities. Families, communities and employers must all share the responsibility. Whether or not a young person has positive interactions with adults and shares the adult world may determine whether or not bonds are formed, opportunity is found, skills are acquired, and a smooth transition into adulthood is achieved.

YOUNG PEOPLE ARE COMPETENT

Today's youth, as is the case with any generation of youth, want to be involved. They want to be

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[3] See National Institute of Education (1978) pages 9 and 43.

active participants in their world, not merely the subjects of those whom they think are in control of it. Because of their adolescent "non-status", they can do little on their own to increase their opportunities. They need advocates, people who will work with them and on their behalf, to alter the conditions and institutional processes that infringe upon their lives. These advocates need to take up the cause of delinquency prevention. And it's time they started including youth in their efforts. Young people are not incompetent and they are not apathetic. They know better than most adults what they need and what opportunities they want. In fact, any program or activity designed for youth will have better success if the youth are part owners rather than mere clients.

THE YOUTH ADVOCACY PROGRAM

In 1979, The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) initiated a Youth Advocacy Program. It was designed to challenge the policies and practices of youth serving institutions that systematically exclude youth from meaningful participation in programs that are designed for them and whose programs, as a consequence, are not responsive to youth needs. The Program encouraged meaningful youth participation in policy decisions which affect youth, primarily in the juvenile justice, educational and social systems.

YOUTH PARTICIPATION

The concept of youth participation often brings to mind the notion of youth representatives on boards and committees, and of keeping young people busy. While the mere involvement of youth in adult activities is worthwhile, it is not the essence of youth participation. Participatory experience on boards and committees is usually limited to token representation. Generally, adults are in control, the work of the group consists of what adults want to do, and youth members are often not given power, appropriate skills and/or the self-confidence to make themselves productive members. Youth representation which is not satisfying to the youth can be counterproductive if it increases the youth's perception that he or she is not capable of expressing ideas or is not deemed valuable by others.

On the other hand, effective youth participation allows active, first-hand performance of a task which makes a young person feel useful, competent, influential and part of a community effort. It teaches young people how to work - with each other and with adults, toward a common goal.

Some of the best opportunities for youthwork are likely to be found in problems and needs of others. The four most frequently developed youth participation programs are:

1. Helping services to others, such as day care and hospital work.

2. Community service work, such as consumer information, in situations where there is less direct contact with those persons being helped.

3. Social action which is directed toward the achievement of a specific development or change in the community, such as restoration of historic places and environmental projects.

4. Community internships, where participants are placed individually with adults at their work places in the community.[4]

The most successful youth participation programs meet the following three criteria:

- They are not designed solely for troublemakers or underachievers. Instead, they encourage the participation of all segments of the youth population.

- They engage the youth in activities that are challenging and interesting to the participants and allow youth to exercise initiative and responsibility.

[4]See Dollar (1975) page 35.

- They provide the youth with adequate training and supervision to perform their tasks well.

Most directors of youth programs would believe and assure us that their programs meet these three criteria. But we adults are often blinded by our biases, particularly when it comes to the rearing of children. Society has trouble ridding itself of the notion that youth must be controlled. Adults continue to believe that they know what is best for the youth population and, when it comes to program design and decision-making, they repeatedly try to retain their position in the driver's seat. But even more troublesome is the notion that delinquency prevention programs should be reserved for the bad kids that need reform. Presumptions such as these will doom even the most carefully designed program to failure.

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention recognizes the potential of youth participation programs. They are consistent with the latest theoretical perspectives and empirical evidence which suggest that young people lead relatively law-abiding lives when they can form a bond with the conventions of society. In addition, youth participation programs are generally not isolated activities. By their very nature, they involve the community, schools, and social institutions such as the juvenile justice system, in the social development of children. And, after all, it is here that the responsibility really lies.

Finally, youth participation programs are cost-effective. Unlike traditional service delivery programs, they do not require large amounts of money for equipment, office space and personnel. Young persons are very resourceful. They are capable of devising ingenious ways of raising money or soliciting community contributions, such as time and equipment.

The program descriptions contained in this technical assistance manual are representative of good Youth Participation programs. But this list is by no means exhaustive. There is a wide range of possibilities for activities that offer legitimate, experience-building opportunities for youth. Let the young people in your community tackle the issue and see for yourselves what they can accomplish.

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PART I. YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN YOUTH ADVOCACY

> The state our society is in is pretty apathetic, but our group has made both youth and adults more aware and given them the opportunity to get involved.
>
> As a group, young people are often viewed as a speechless class whose needs are articulated by others... We should be organizing to participate in the decision-making which affects our lives.
>
> When this project started, the young people didn't have a notion about how you move things and make things happen. Now they do.

WHY YOUTH PARTICIPATION IS ESSENTIAL

These are the words of advocates--youth and adults--working for change in the institutions that affect young people. The need for their efforts is particularly strong now, when public resources are scarce. As schools and courts, health services and job programs undergo changes, the interests of young people must be represented or their needs will not be met.

Unfortunately, many of the organizations that work on behalf of youth do not offer young people the opportunity to participate in their efforts. Although most advocacy organizations are keenly aware of the need to involve their constituents, many *youth advocacy* organizations continue to be run entirely by adults.

Some adults feel that involving youth will siphon off financial and personnel resources that should go directly into advocacy. Others argue that young people are at an unstable stage of their lives and cannot make the sustained commitment which advocacy demands. Still others point out that young people do not have the sophistication and skills which advocacy requires. These are all valid concerns, yet they skirt the fundamental issue that youth advocacy without participation by youth is incomplete. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention puts the matter this way:

> Without [youth] participation, the programs run the risk of being ignored and irrelevant to young people. The involvement of young people...insures that the advocacy efforts will be targeted on the areas of greatest concern. Youth are in the best position to know the weaknesses and shortcomings of youth-serving institutions.[1]

The programs described in the Guide demonstrate that young people, when given the chance, can make a real contribution to institutions that affect them. Advocacy groups attempting to change the way that young people are treated by institutions will want to demonstrate a new approach themselves. By involving young people significantly within their own organization, they become models of institutional change.

WHAT YOUTH GAIN FROM PARTICIPATION

Assuring young people a role in advocacy helps them gain a sense of contributing to their community and thus of connection to it. Through their participation, young people master skills that are essential for personal satisfaction, as well as for serving others. The combination of meaningful involvement and skill development is critical to discouraging delinquency. Young people gain a stake in the well-being of their communities and hope for their personal futures.

KEY ELEMENTS OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION

The National Commission on Resources for Youth (NCRY) has developed and documented Youth Participation programs since 1967. NCRY has identified the following characteristics as essential to a strong program: challenging and meaningful tasks, involvement in planning and decision making, collaboration with peers and adults, and opportunities to reflect critically on their activities.[2]

Advocacy offers an excellent setting for programs with these elements. Few activities are as challenging or as meaningful as improving the institutions which influence our lives. Young people may take on responsibility and develop skills in activities ranging from publishing newsletters to giving public testimony at a legislative hearing. They can gain experience in planning and making decisions in groups when the organization involves them in selecting objectives,

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[1] LEAA (1979), p. 25.

[2] McClosky and Kleinbard, (1974).

working out strategies, and organizing the work which must be done. Because they know that others depend upon their efforts, young people are often particularly conscientious in carrying out such responsibilities.

Involving young people in advocacy can strengthen the organization as well as benefit the youth participants. Designs for Change, an advocacy research organization in Chicago, has isolated five broad characteristics of successful advocacy groups:

- Maintaining a strong organization
- Gathering comprehensive and accurate information
- Developing a strategy that shapes action
- Building support
- Intervening to improve institutions[3]

Young people can contribute to many of these efforts. First, they strengthen the organization by keeping it grounded in the concerns of its constituents. When young people are involved in an organization, they remind adults of youth's real needs and concerns. Second, young people are often effective at gathering information about youth because they are trusted by their peers and can put the information in context. With training, they can do thorough and accurate research which becomes the basis for institutional change efforts. Third, young people are often helpful in suggesting strategies for change. They are not handicapped by stereotypes and they are directly involved with the situation to be changed. Thus they may have practical and innovative ideas. Finally, with training and support, young people can intervene at policy levels to improve institutions by sitting on boards, negotiating with officials and testifying before legislative bodies.

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[3]Designs for Change, (1980).

Involving young people requires time and resources, yet organizations that have made the effort find that it is justified by the results. In Section II, which follows, we describe what some of these organizations have learned and how they successfully incorporated Youth Participation into youth advocacy. In Section III, we describe actual programs.

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PART II. SOME PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Young people can research issues, monitor code enforcement, present testimony, spread information and perform many other valuable roles in advocacy organizations. Few young people, however, can do these things without preparation. Behind successful programs are supportive adults and peers who have recruited, trained and assisted the young people. If Youth Participation is to be successfully incorporated into youth advocacy, adults and trained youth must commit time, skill, energy and money to making it work. Part II suggests ways in which those resources might best be invested.

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

Youth Participation, like any major effort of an organization, requires that one staff member make a commitment. The early stages of the project, especially, will be difficult and the organizer must be freed of other major tasks.

Good organizers can be either experienced youth or adults; in either case, the qualities of the person who works directly with the youth must be given careful consideration. Young people know the qualities that they find essential. The following description was generated by a group of youth at an NCRY Idea Exchange on Adult Supervisors:

QUALITIES OF YOUTH ORGANIZERS

> Independent people, people who don't need security blankets, who can be genuine with students because they are secure in themselves. They should be people who are flexible, who are willing not to be in control all the time; who can be friends and advisors simultaneously, not just one or the other, not just too much friend or too much advisor.
>
> People who have lots of time to devote to the program, and are generous with their time. If they notice you aren't feeling well or seem a little out of it, they are willing to take that extra

step to reach out and ask you what's happening. Sense of humor is really important. Reliability, always being there, and being there on time. Enthusiasm. Perseverance. Trusting people who can show a genuine interest in everybody; outgoing. Innovative people who can take an idea places it has never been before.

People who can talk on a mutual level, with respect, on a person-to-person rather than a role-to-child level. People who are willing to take risks, to gamble to some extent. Good listeners. Not people who pretend to have all the answers. Humans with faults. Open to criticism.

People who can stay with it when the going gets tough. Who can direct students into positive action; give information about alternatives and help students solve their problems, not solve them for them. People who can go out and aggressively manipulate the system.[1]

RECRUITMENT

Many advocacy organizations are faced with the fundamental problem of locating youth. Organizations founded and run by adults may discover that they have few contacts with young people. Youth-serving organizations may find it difficult to interest young people in advocacy. Programs that want to involve youth will need to approach the task in three stages: first, finding a pool of young people, second, interesting individual youth in advocacy, and third, developing the youth's sense of commitment to the agency's goals.

FINDING YOUNG PEOPLE

One way to find young people is to identify and offer services they need. For example, the Youth and Shelter Services Program (p. 30) began by providing crisis intervention to youth and their families;

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[1]National Commission on Resources for Youth (1980).

later, many of those youth formed the Committee for Youth Justice. Young people may also help adults in service projects and get to know them in a collaborative atmosphere. In that context, adults or other youth can explain the organization's advocacy work and invite the youth to participate.

There is however, the potential for conflict of interest when combining service with advocacy, and both youth and adults should take this into consideration. The targets of advocacy are often the same public agencies that fund an organization's service projects, and unless they are careful, staff may find themselves in the position of biting the hand that feeds them.

Organizations may reach young people through agencies and institutions that have regular contact with them. A local school might cooperate by allowing an organization to sponsor a student assembly, set up an information booth or put posters on school bulletin boards. Individual teachers who are interested might welcome a presentation about an advocacy project; teachers or administrators may be willing to arrange school credit for student participation in the project. Church groups or recreation centers may provide forums for project presentations. Social workers, counselors or juvenile court judges may be willing to refer young people to a Youth Participation project. Some organizations have captured the attention of young people by sponsoring essay contests or by conducting surveys of youth opinions in shopping malls or other public places. As the young people become more involved, they also become more visible; this, in turn, attracts more youth. One program director commented, "The first time we did recruitment, we took anyone we could find. The second time, we had so many applicants we could be selective."

INCENTIVES

Incentives also are important in recruitment. Organizations can offer training, contact with community leaders, certificates of merit, school credit (if an appropriate arrangement is made), or valuable work experience that can be added to a resume. Monetary incentives also can be used. The Youth Development and Training Project (p. 59), which pays young people for after-school training that prepares them to join community boards, always has

more applicants than positions. Paying young people does, however, require careful screening to identify youth for whom the program will be more than "just a job." The Youth Action Program (p. 52), for instance, screens young people by starting them in unpaid positions. When they have demonstrated their commitment, they are able to move on to paid jobs within the organization.

It is essential that recruitment continue once the project is underway so that the group of youth will continue to expand and not remain limited to a few "stars."

GETTING YOUTH INTERESTED IN ADVOCACY

Once you've located potential recruits, you will need to help them understand advocacy. This requires patience and sensitivity since, in most cases, you will have to break down stereotypes young people have about themselves, adults and society. They are not accustomed to being influential, so the very idea of advocacy may seem suspect and even threatening. Although they have a deep need for challenge and responsibility, many young people believe that they are not capable of making real contributions and that, in any case, society will not respond to their efforts.

Information about successful youth advocacy efforts, including case studies such as those presented in this booklet, may be useful in encouraging their participation.

Some youth may have difficulty relating to the abstract or long range goals of an organization. Although it's important for young people to know how their work fits into the whole effort, recruitment is easier if youth realize that they will be working towards a goal with visible results. Many successful programs encourage participants to take responsibility for specific segments of the advocacy effort. For example, the major goal of the Open Road Student Involvement Program (p. 35) is to reduce violence and vandalism in schools, but members of the Concerned Student Organizations take responsibility for surveying their peers and exploring solutions to the five most commonly perceived problems.

In the early stages of a Youth Participation project, it is essential to set aside time for new youth members

to develop personal relationships with adults and other youth participants. Such relationships will help youth members to find the project a rewarding experience. Having a core group of committed youth and adults is the magnet that will draw others most powerfully.

DEVELOPING COMMITMENT

Advocacy requires long term commitment because attitudes and institutions change slowly, but young people's lives change so quickly that they are often unable to make such a commitment. By breaking large projects down into components, organizations can reasonably demand commitment to a three month, six month or year-long project. "Young people have a need for commitment," says one youth advocate. "You can't have the adult responsibility of advocacy without it."

Although it is important to expect commitment, it is also necessary for adults to realize that some young people won't remain with the project. If possible, programs should be established in such a way that they won't be jeopardized when young people leave to take jobs or attend college or because they realize that advocacy isn't "their thing." Some organizations start young people in a trial period when they do jobs that don't require much training. Others create a hierarchy of tasks in which youth *and* adults earn the right to more training and responsibility by accomplishing basic jobs. Still others train several youth to do the same job, an approach that benefits the entire group by creating a backup; as one youth puts it, "Having fifteen people who know how to write a petition is better than having only one person know."

TRAINING

Training is essential for successful youth advocacy. Adults often will need training so they can learn to work effectively with young people. Sometimes adults resent the time spent training young people and may feel that it's easier to do things themselves. "You have to realize that you simply can't do everything yourself," says one project director. "By training young people, you multiply the effect of your organization."

Training also empowers young people. With effective training they can become full-fledged participants in the organization. As they become knowledgeable and competent, young people gain confidence in themselves and in their ability to improve their world.

SKILLS: BASIC AND SOPHISTICATED

The first problem may be young people's lack of basic skills. Advocacy organizations can't take responsibility for teaching young people to read and write, but they may need to break tasks down into their smallest components. For instance, young people working on the phone may learn to write out notes before they make calls. Although it's tempting to depend upon the most able youth, adults need to deliberately cultivate the skills of *all* participants. "Usually the most articulate student is chosen to represent the group," says one youth. "But it is important that all members of the group learn good speaking skills. Relying on one member does not promote the group's growth."

Adults and youth often feel uncomfortable about training because they assume it means attending classes of some kind. Although some subjects may best be taught through formal lectures, most youth learn best by doing. They can begin with defined tasks like making phone calls, writing short items for a newsletter or doing basic research. All jobs, no matter how basic, can provide learning opportunities and make valuable contributions to the efforts of the organization. It is important that young people have opportunities to do a wide variety of tasks and to move on to progressively more sophisticated tasks. Good work on basic tasks should be rewarded by more responsible and challenging assignments. "Young people take most readily to social projects--producing a radio show, surveying their peers, and so on," says one project director, "so we start them with those activities. They are less effective in activities which require extended individual effort or contact with adults outside the organization, so we involve them in those areas only after extensive training."

OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING

Good training also takes advantage of opportunities as they arise. For example, if students are frustrated by a confrontation with institutional authorities, a responsive facilitator can lead them into a discussion of how power structures evolve and how they can be changed. Similarly, meetings, conferences and hearings are natural educational opportunities. "Take young people to a conference and they'll develop sophistication overnight," says a program director. "They come back motivated to do details because they understand they are part of a larger movement."

Many adults take an "over the shoulder" approach to training. They include young people in meetings, hearings and office activities. Throughout such activities, the adults "think out loud" explaining why they make certain decisions and do things in certain ways. After a hearing or meeting, they "debrief" the young person by discussing what happened and why.

Some groups find it more effective for young people to discover their own strategies for goal-setting, negotiation and conflict resolution. In these programs, young people are given total responsibility for some aspect of the project. Although they have adult support, the young people must work through whatever problems arise. This approach requires restraint on the part of adults in the program. "Adults are usually in a position of controlling young people," says one young person, "so it's hard for them not to do that in an advocacy project. It's important to let students do their own tasks. Adults have to make a special effort to avoid hidden agendas."

TRUST

The key to effective training is trust. If the young people trust the adults in the organization, they will feel free to ask for information, assistance and more responsibility. If the adults trust the young people, they will be comfortable having them observe and participate in every aspect of the organization's work. One of the best ways to create trust is to establish a regular opportunity for discussion. A weekly meeting where staff of all ages can share problems and progress is perhaps the best way to assure continuing communication. Encouraging openness on both sides results in the inter-generational respect which is essential to advocacy work.

EXCELLENCE IS IMPORTANT

Always demand excellence, even if this means asking the young people (or adults) to redo a piece of work several times. This is particularly true with regard to data collection. Adults who are the targets of an advocacy effort may try to discredit the research or information that has been obtained by youth. Organizations that ask youth to assist in gathering information will need to anticipate this distrust and be certain that they can demonstrate that their data collection process has been rigorous. "Too many organizations say to young people, 'Just be whatever you want to be,'" complains one project coordinator.

"That's not enough. It's important to expect things - demand things - from the young people because the outside world makes demands." When these demands are made by supportive adults who can answer questions and help work out problems as they arise, they show respect for youth and what they can accomplish.

SERIAL LEADERSHIP

At its best, training is an ongoing part of Youth Participation in advocacy. Established organizations like Youth Communication (p.57), often depend upon experienced youth to train new recruits. In addition to its obvious benefits for the new recruit, "serial leadership" enhances the self-esteem and reinforces the learning of the more experienced young person.

YOUTH PARTICIPATION IS WORTH THE EFFORT

In some advocacy organizations, adults question the idea of Youth Participation because it consumes resources that are scarce. Even adults who believe in the benefits of Youth Participation may resist spending time with young people if it means taking time away from their goal of reform of the school or juvenile justice system. "The thing we must remember," says Paul Weckstein of the Center for Law and Education, "is that young people have a *right* to be involved in advocacy on their behalf!"

Involving young people in advocacy requires extra effort from the adults in the organization. Yet organizations that invest in the effort earn it back with interest. Through Youth Participation, advocacy organizations help individual young people become competent, contributing adults. And the ideas, energy and hard work of those young people both illustrate and advance the organization's goals.

REFERENCES

National Commission on Resources for Youth 1980 *Resources for Youth* newsletter Vol. IX,iii. New York, NY

PART III. WHAT YOUTH CAN DO: MODEL PROJECTS

This section of the *Guide* describes advocacy activities that young people have handled successfully in actual programs that NCRY has documented.[1] These projects have been developed to respond to local needs using local resources. The advocacy activities in the different projects are combined in complex clusters, making it difficult to categorize the projects on the basis of their major activities. Instead, we have prepared a chart showing the range of advocacy activities and have indicated which activities are included in each of the nineteen projects.

The activities included are:

Information Gathering and Dissemination

Monitoring - Youth check such institutions as schools or planning boards to gather information about or ensure implementation of such procedures as discipline codes or financial applications.

Research - Youth do extensive research to prepare presentations or answer questions. Does not include surveys or studying issues for media articles.

Public Speaking - Youth speak at classes, conferences, hearings, or other events outside the project.

Skits and plays - Youth perform in-house or public plays or skits.

Workshops and other events - Youth plan and run workshops, forums, or conferences.

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[1] Detailed 4-10 page descriptions of these projects are available from NCRY, Room 1314, 36 West 44th Street, New York, New York 10036. Write for information on how to order these reports.

Newsletters and newspapers - Youth generally research their articles before writing, so these projects are not included in the Research category.

Books and booklets - Youth produce handbooks, comic books, guides.

Radio - Youth generally research their topics before broadcasting, so these projects are not included in the Research category.

Training

Youth train adults or train youth outside the project.

Problem-Solving

Youth engage in a deliberate problem-solving process.

Testifying, Negotiating, Filing Legislation

Youth negotiate with legislators or other public officials or develop legislation.

Inevitably, some projects go out of existence or change from the time we have written our case study. Most readers find that the information about projects is useful to them, whether or not they continue to operate in exactly the same form.

ACTIVITIES OF YOUTH PARTICIPANTS

Projects & Page #'s	INFORMATION GATHERING & DISSEMINATION							OTHER ACTIVITIES		
	Research	Public Speaking	Skit/ Plays	Workshops & other events	Newsletters, Newspapers & Booklets	Monitoring	Radio	Training	Problem-Solving	Testifying, Negotiating, Filing Legislation
Aunt Martha's Advocacy Unit p. 26	•	•	•	•	•			•		
The Centre, Inc. p. 28				•	•					
Committee for Youth Justice p. 30	•				•					
Foundation for Youth Involvement p. 32	•			•				•		
Los Angeles City Youth Advisory Acouncil p. 33				•	•					
Open Road/ Student Involvement p. 35									•	
Project Prevention p. 37		•	•							
Project to Monitor Code of Discipline p. 39		•				•		•		

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

RAYAP p. 41						•				
Stu. Adv. Co. p. 43	•	•				•		•		•
Stu Svc. Ctr. p. 45	•			•	•					
YES Change p. 47		•		•	•		•	•		•
Young Women's Journalism p. 50		•		•	•					
Youth Action Program p. 52		•		•	•			•	•	•
Youth Advocacy Project p. 55	•	•	•					•	•	•
Youth Communication /New York Center p. 57					•					
Youth Development & Training p. 59	•									
Youth Development - N.W. Bronx p. 61						•		•	•	•
Youth News p. 64							•			

AUNT MARTHA'S ADVOCACY UNIT

The young staff members in the Advocacy Unit at Aunt Martha's Youth Service Center focus on improving their community's attitudes toward youth and on expanding the awareness of local youth about their rights and responsibilities. In addition, staff members in the entire agency are devoted to full involvement of youth at all levels of Aunt Martha's operation. The Coordinator of Youth Involvement is a youth herself; in her words, "My job is to keep a steady stream of Youth Participation in all programs, and to make sure youth-adult problems get solved...Basically, I make sure that all levels of Youth Participation are working."

SKITS

The Advocacy Unit comprises several projects. Chief among these is Project LISTEN, in which young people developed (with an adult playwright) a play titled "Different People: Different Times," to dramatize their concerns. A youth coordinator chooses performance sites, directs the play, and facilitates discussions that regularly follow performances. As of mid-1980, the group had performed the play for more than 2300 people, and were concentrating on follow-up with those who, after seeing the play, had decided to incorporate Youth Participation in their programs. The final chorus sums up the play's major message:

> We want to choose.
> You want to steer.
> You need to listen.
> We need to hear...
> Give us a chance to
> Give and to take.
> Give us the freedom
> To make a mistake.

NEWSPAPER

Other young people in the Advocacy Unit created and publish *Connections*, a youth-run bi-monthly newspaper. The paper "emphasizes student rights, school advocacy, that type of thing," according to its editor. It is distributed free of charge to area high schools and restaurants and stores frequented by youth.

Project Who-Needs-It? takes youth staff members to fifth and sixth grade classrooms, where they introduce the younger students to skills in decision-making, coping with peer pressure, and assertiveness. These skills are aimed specifically at preventing alcohol or drug abuse in the young students, but Aunt Martha's staff also hope their new skills will serve them throughout their lives.

TRAINING

Youth and adult staff members also developed and now run the Center for Student Citizenship, Rights and Responsibilities. The Center comprises three components. One component trains youth for leadership roles in schools and community; training is provided by adults and youth. A survey component involves young people in data collection about students' reasons for dropping out of school. And, in the community education component, youth teach parents and other youth about their rights in relation to schools.

These projects reflect the agency's conviction that "most youth, like adults, can handle and want responsibility and meaning in their lives." Aunt Martha's recruits youth as volunteers and encourages them to take on increasing amounts of responsibility. This method is summarized by Director Gary Leofanti: "Young people can be involved in almost any aspect of advocacy, but first you must involve them in every aspect of your organization."

For further information:

Gary Leofanti
Executive Director
Aunt Martha's Youth Service Center
Advocacy Unit
221 Plaza
Park Forest, IL 60466

THE CENTRE, INC.

Adult and youth staff members at the Centre, Inc., hope to make the juvenile justice and other youth-serving systems more responsive to youth's real needs. Their belief is that youth who know their rights and responsibilities will expect or demand more equitable treatment.

Bill steals a television. Juan takes someone's car for a joyride. And Wanda beats up a girl in school. Sound familiar? To many young people in Chicago and surrounding Cook County, such scenes are all too familiar, and many of these young people need some guidance in dealing with the arrests and court appearances that follow. To provide guidance, youth and adult staff at the Centre, Inc., created

BOOKLET

a comic book called *Busted: Youth and the Law in Cook County, Illinois*. The book describes the arrests and court appearances of the three youth mentioned above, giving young people tips on how to behave and what to expect at each stage of the process.

Busted is only one of many products of the youth staff at the Centre, a multi-service youth center in the Uptown neighborhood of Chicago, in which youth and adult staff have developed services and special projects in employment, consumer skills, legal services, health care and financial management in response to needs expressed by young people drawn in by the Centre's recreation program. The number of full-time youth staff varies between one and six at any one period, while other young people are involved on a project-by-project basis, and may number up to 60 in a year. Youth's involvement in these beneficial projects has helped to change attitudes about young people among community adults.

WORKSHOPS

Young people have worked on Project CHANGE, in which three groups of youth designed and led presentations about substance abuse, money management, and youth employment for area youth. Each group also created special products. The employment group, for instance, wrote a manual that lists all local job training programs and employment agencies.

The Community/Consumer Education Project involved young people as consumer educators. They produced brochures, conducted surveys, and wrote skits. Topics included health care, tenant rights, and general consumer skills such as comparative shopping.

The comic book *Busted* was so successful that youth staff followed it with publication of *Hired: Or, How to Find a Job*. Again, a clever comic format provides teenagers with tips on how to go about finding jobs and keeping them. A third comic book, on money management, is in the works.

The young people who have participated in designing Centre programs have gained numerous skills. The young woman who coordinated Project CHANGE notes that "writing skills were sharpened as the youth wrote press releases and memos, reading skills developed as they were required to read relevant materials, and many gained in such skills as video operation and research. In addition, many gained confidence when they led meetings or made group decisions." An adult staff member summarized: "We give young people their first opportunity to play a role in the community."

For further information:

Susan Dunlap, Director
The Centre, Inc.
1116 West Leland Avenue
Chicago, IL 60640

COMMITTEE FOR YOUTH JUSTICE

The Committee for Youth Justice was formed by youth from Youth and Shelter Services in Ames, Iowa, who became concerned over the lack of youth rights or knowledge of them. They thought that if youth were better informed, they would demand that services become more responsive to their needs.

Many lessons have been learned since the project began in 1976. An adult advisor says that one lesson learned by the youth members is that "adults are not as crazy as they seem." Staff members realized that "young people learn best if they do things themselves."

BOOKLET

The young people's major task has been the research, writing, editing and production of the *Youth Rights and Responsibilities Handbook,* a thirty-six page booklet that a staff member says tells you "everything you've ever wanted to know about being a youth in Iowa." Sections of the booklet discuss police encounters, family relationships, sexuality, drug use, first amendment rights in schools, employment, property ownership, juvenile court procedures, and offense classifications and their resulting punishments. An information directory completes the book.

Production began with a small booklet about rights in one county. It was extremely popular and another edition was published. The second edition caught the eye of the Iowa Crime Commission, which provided funds for the committee to produce a state-wide edition. During the course of their work, committee members had many conversations with lawyers and judges, as well as with many other resource people in the state.

Committee members also completed a study of birth control resources in their area, providing information to young people in Ames on types of birth control and their availability. Other members have served on the state Juvenile Justice Advisory Council, a group composed primarily of young people, which advises the Iowa Crime Commission about youth needs and concerns. Members have also worked on other projects at Youth and Shelter Services, most notably a yearly "Summerfest" of music, dance, contests, and other entertainment for youth.

The major benefit of the youth's participation, says a staff member, is that "there is a lot more understanding between youth and the people they think are coming down on them." The Committee for Youth Justice counteracts an adult view, says a participant, that young people are "a speechless class whose needs are articulated by others."

For further information:

Denise Denton
Youth and Shelter Services
804 Kellogg
Ames, IA 50010

FOUNDATION FOR YOUTH INVOLVEMENT

The youth staff and members of the Foundation for Youth Involvement hope to create a city government that is more responsive to the needs of youth. They help legislators and journalists know what youth are thinking and what they want. And they help youth to see how their city government works and to express their views to those who can make a difference. Since they provide information to both sides, it is no coincidence that their acronym, FYI, is commonly understood to stand for "For Your Information."

WORKSHOPS

RESEARCH

FYI, founded by a group of high school students, has sponsored Speak-Outs, like the recent one about student involvement in school governance, and a regular program called "Intro: New York," that introduces one hundred students at a time to city government. The group also conducts youth polls and research projects that provide background for their other programs.

Three adult staff members work with the project, along with a Board of Sponsors that includes legislators, school administrators, lawyers and financial sponsors. The board of directors is composed of FYI's original founders, now college students, and of all the organization's past presidents.

Last year's president thinks that all participants gain in public speaking, polling, research, recruitment, legislative and office skills. At a recent conference, adults who listened to her speak were amazed at her poise and confidence, as well as her grasp of the issues discussed. These traits, she feels, have been developed and polished through her work with the project.

For further information:

Roy D. Oppenheim, Executive Director
Foundation for Youth Involvement, Inc.
1220 Broadway, Room 603
New York, NY 10001

LOS ANGELES CITY YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL (YAC)

The young members of the Los Angeles City Youth Advisory Council provide policy makers with information about city government, as well as working to create a youth constituency in Los Angeles. They believe their efforts help city government to be more responsive to youth.

When Mayor Tom Bradley developed the first Los Angeles City Youth Advisory Council, he had two major goals in mind. First, he wanted to provide young people with a chance to have direct experience with city government, officials and politics. Second, he wanted to develop skilled leaders who could provide him with advice and information about the issues concerning young people in Los Angeles. More than 150 youth have served on the Council since its first meeting was held in 1974.

Thirty-five council members serve at one time. Of these, fifteen are appointed by City Council members, who nominate youth from their own districts. Ten are appointed by the mayor, based on recommendations from current YAC members or others, and ten are selected by present YAC members through a process of city-wide application and interview.

YAC meets twice a month; their meetings are open to the public. Members have formed committees which are responsible for several topic areas, including public relations (which produces a newsletter), youth-rights and advocacy, and education. In addition, YAC members form *ad hoc* committees several times during the year to plan regular yearly events. These events are: Youth Issues Forum, which provides an opportunity for young people to voice their concerns to a panel of policy makers; Youth Day, which involves workshops, panels and entertainment for Los Angeles youth; and Youth Awards, which recognizes the contributions of young people in Los Angeles to their communities.

WORKSHOPS

Prospective YAC members are able to participate in Youth Leadership Training Programs, in which adults train youth in community organizing, public speaking, juvenile justice, the political process, and business

and economic development. Some of the graduates of these programs also serve on Area Task Forces that focus on smaller local issues, and report back to YAC.

One ex-member now works in the mayor's office and is enthusiastic about the benefits of participation in YAC. "It gives you awareness of city government and what it's all about," he says. "You realize that you can become a part of city government - it's not them against you." He also mentions that "you are exposed to people from all different professions, so you begin to broaden your alternatives."

This same participant stresses that youth should be involved in all planning stages for a council. As he says, "youth service providers should do things with young people, not for them. Who knows better what the needs of youth are then other young people? We're talking about developing youth as leaders, so they have to be aware of the whole process, planning, financing, etc. Here in the mayor's office, we talk about empowering youth."

For further information:

Olivia Mitchell
Director of Office of Youth Development
City Hall, Room 2200
200 North Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

OPEN ROAD/STUDENT INVOLVEMENT PROJECT

Staff members at the Open Road/Student Involvement Project encourage the abilities of "natural leaders" by involving them in a major effort to counteract violence and vandalism in California schools. The project developed when staff members recognized that "while every major report examining the causes of school violence and vandalism has urged greater student and parent involvement, there has been little effort in this direction." The Student Involvement Project was created in 1976 to train "young people to deal directly with critical concerns affecting the school environment."

A specific project begins when Open Road staff approach the school principal to explain the program. The principal selects a teacher to be the project sponsor, and arranges for that teacher to be given a teaching period for a Leadership Training Class and a free period to coordinate the work of the Concerned Student Organization (CSO). Then that teacher selects "natural leaders" to become members of the CSO, based on recommendations from other teachers, students or administrators. Natural leaders aren't necessarily model students. They may be gang leaders or the best vandals. But they are recruited to be members of CSO's in twenty California high schools and junior highs.

PROBLEM-SOLVING

About half the members of the CSO meet in the daily Leadership Training Class, where they learn how school decisions are made, what their own rights and responsibilities are and how they can effect change. At the same time, all members of the CSO begin to identify school needs by surveying their peers and identifying five major issues. They create several possible solutions and work with the school administration to develop the most practical one. Students in the class receive academic credit.

One CSO created the Communications Network, designed to defuse rumors that might cause violence between students or by students against the school, such as a rumor of a fight between two students that could

lead to a gang confrontation. Approximately sixty students (CSO members and non-members) receive special training and are each assigned to one classroom. They elect a council of eleven members to meet with the administration when there is a need to provide accurate information to all students. The council members pass on the information to the sixty network members, who in turn pass it on to the people in their assigned classrooms. They also inform their peers about school procedures and ask for input.

Other CSO's have written grievance procedures, revised discriminatory club policies and published student rights handbooks. Members meet regularly and usually rotate facilitating the meetings. Perhaps as important as any specific accomplishment is the emerging feeling that students can constructively influence what happens in the school. "Out here in the hall, we put up a sign showing a brown hand shaking a black hand," says one CSO member. "It shows two races getting together instead of fighting. It's the same with the CSO. I thought we were going to try it and people were't going to listen. But it is helping. We are getting somewhere."

For further information:

David Reiss
Open Road/Student Involvement Project
1429 Summerland Avenue
San Pedro, CA 90732

PROJECT PREVENTION

PUBLIC SPEAKING

Staff members for Project Prevention believe that informing young people and their parents about their rights and responsibilities with regard to the juvenile justice system will allow them to demand appropriate treatment, thus making the system more accountable to them. Young ex-offenders have become involved in this effort by describing their experiences to junior high students in several of New York City's school districts. They believe that the information they provide will deter the younger children from criminal involvement. Their discussions take the form of rap groups, panels, large-audience presentations or skits.

The project was created when staff members at Offender Aid and Restoration, an intervention and advocacy organization, recognized the need for prevention in "high risk" communities. The young ex-offenders are paid to lead the discussions. Staff members feel that paying the participants well is essential to the success of the program because they come from low-income families and need the money for essentials like clothing and transportation. After their initial training, the young people meet once a week for further training and reflection on the program. The rest of the time, they are in the schools making presentations about their involvement with crime and its effect on their lives and families. The presentations have had the desired effect on the younger students. As one responded, "Crime is cruel, not funny. It's sad, it hurts and it makes you pay for your sins."

The program has also changed the young people who participate. Because they are responsible for the presentations they make, they have to think through their own experiences and develop skills that will allow them to communicate what they've been through. "They've gone from being young people who just shuffle their feet to young people who will confront

peers in a peer group," says an adult advisor. "The result of explaining personal responsibility to younger students is that they take more responsibility themselves."

For further information:

Gene Klein, Director
Offender Aid and Restoration
184 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10010

PROJECT TO MONITOR THE CODE OF DISCIPLINE

"Abuses in discipline will never be eliminated until students are fully informed of their rights and take an active role in monitoring the school district's implementation of those rights," explains one participant in the Project to Monitor the Code of Discipline. This is particularly true for Boston, where school desegregation led to an increase in racial disparity in school suspensions, and students were rarely given an active role in alleviating this situation.

A committee of teachers, administrators, parents, students and advocates began work in the late 1970's to create a code of discipline for the Boston schools that would replace the 1970 code. Their new code was scheduled to take effect in September, 1980. To ensure that the new code would be followed, two advocacy organizations cooperated with court-ordered parent and student groups to create a monitoring project. Members of these organizations formed the project Board and recruited staff members. They also selected schools in which to begin their monitoring.

MONITORING

TRAINING

In each selected school, project staff helped to establish a student/parent team whose members train other students and parents from that school in organizing, monitoring and data collection techniques. The aim is to recruit those students who have not typically been involved in school or community action. These students have been particularly successful in advocacy for themselves, says the project director. At one high school, school personnel wanted to expel a young man when he was only six months short of graduation. He had documented their violations of the discipline code on several occasions, however, and he presented these violations to the school headmaster and then to the district superintendent. His work earned him the right to stay in school.

The project director says she has seen evidence of change in the student participants. They have been able to work out problems in getting along with one another, she says, because staff members have helped

them understand that their goals are more important than personality clashes: "You can't let those clashes get in the way of your work."

For further information:

Carmen Pola, Director
Project to Monitor the Code of Discipline
2 Park Square, 6th Floor
Boston, MA 02116

RURAL ALABAMA YOUTH ADVOCACY PROJECT

The twenty-six youth ombudsmen in the Rural Alabama Youth Advocacy Project (RAYAP) form one link of an information chain that is helping to improve conditions in the schools in thirteen Alabama counties. The project's goal is to effect change in the public school systems through advocacy of student rights and responsibilities.

Most of the youth ombudsmen were chosen by their peers in elections set up after the school principals were told about the project by adult staff. They represent the two, or sometimes three, high schools in each of the thirteen counties that comprise the "Black Belt" of Alabama; 85% of the population is Black. Each county also has an adult county coordinator for the project, as well as eight staff members in the project's central office.

The youth were trained by the adult county coordinator and a staff member from the central office. They were made aware of the project's goal and their potential contribution, and learned the specifics of youth rights, communications and assertiveness. They are paid minimum wage for ten hours of work a week.

MONITORING

During this time, they gather information about problem situations in their own schools and provide that information to their county coordinator. The coordinator, in turn, takes the information to a Local Advisory Task Force (LATF), composed of parents or other family members, teachers, social service workers and representatives from the Board of Education. The county coordinator and the LATF then meet with administrators and teachers from the school in question, to discuss the problem and work out a solution.

In the fall of 1980, for example, a young woman who had had a baby during the summer, returned to find she had been dismissed from the majorettes. Later in the fall she was suspended from school for other reasons. The youth ombudsmen from her school related her story to their county coordinator, who

took it to the LATF. The coordinator then accompanied the student to the Board of Education, and was able to convince them to reinstate the student in school, and subsequently into the majorettes. A staff member for the project said this reinstatement set a precedent in that county.

A project staff member notes that in the project's first year, change was already evident. For the students, she says, "being able to work with the administration on an equal basis is a change." She adds that the youth ombudsmen's work is beneficial to the community, too, since it lets people see young people that are capable and interested in helping their schools and their peers.

For further information:

Curtis Jernigan, Project Director
Rural Alabama Youth Advocacy Project
Room 203, Moton Hall
Tuskegee Institute, AL 36088

STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCILS

Young people serving on Student Advisory Councils (SAC's) work to create legislation and policies that are more responsive to youth, and enable their peers to become directly involved in policy making by providing them with necessary information. *Massachusetts Students in Decision Making,* the project's final report for 1977, describes the reasoning that led to the project's creation:

> The democratic system of this country is rooted in the belief that all citizens who are affected by the system should have a voice in deciding how the system is to be set up...Students should be thought of as participants, not merely recipients of the educational process.

The report goes on to say that, for students, participation "is an important part of their education that should not be denied them." For this reason, a Youth Advisory Council was established in 1969 by the State Commissioner of Education. By 1971, the Council had assisted in drafting legislation to ensure more substantial student involvement in decision-making. Chapter 1009 of the Acts of 1971 provided for a student to serve as a voting member of the State Board of Education, and created a network of regional Student Advisory Councils. Each regional council was to elect representatives to a State Student Advisory Council (SSAC) to the State Board of Education. The chairperson of this SSAC would serve as the student member of the State Board.

Members of the eleven Student Advisory Councils are involved in a number of activities, including:

LEGISLATION

- drafting and filing legislation
- legislative position planning
- education about legislative procedures

- congressional testimony
- task force participation
- disseminating information
- surveys of schools and school services
- work on regional and special projects.

They have drafted such bills as the Student Rights and Responsibilities Legislation, which guarantees students constitutional rights accorded to other citizens. They developed "The State House Game," which simulates the state legislature and teaches about choosing a bill and getting it passed. They have also developed a school discipline code and a model release form for student records.

The Student Advisory Councils are run by students. They arrange and conduct meetings, and make most, if not all, the decisions about the goals, activities and strategies the Councils will employ. They use adult advisors primarily as resources for information and training.

Students in Massachusetts have an advocate and a connection to policy making levels through the Student Advisory Council system. And the Councils' participants "learn about legal issues, dealing with people, how legislation is developed, how decisions are made," according to a staff member.

For further information:

Joan Schuman, Director
Bureau of Student Services
182 Tremont Street
Boston, MA 02111

STUDENT SERVICE CENTERS

The young staff members at five Student Service Centers in Massachusetts hope to create a more responsive educational system by providing their peers with information that will allow them to exercise their rights and take advantage of every educational opportunity. Acting on the belief that "information is power," the young people provide information and assistance to youth and adults who have questions about education.

RESEARCH

Approximately thirty paid youth staff conduct research, answer requests, handle referrals, publish a newsletter, and maintain speaker and topic files. The Centers developed when members of the state Youth Advisory Council (described above) determined a need for a resource and research center to answer a variety of questions they had faced about educational laws, regulations, policies and practices.

The Centers are open from 9 to 5. Students most often work after school, though some come in at noon on independent study arrangements. Morning staffing is usually covered by adults. Young people are responsible for most of the decisions and management of the Centers.

A sample of requests for information included such questions as: Can a teacher search your locker or desk without your permission? Can a teacher ban a book from class? On the question of searching lockers and desks, the SSC staff member called the legal office of the State Commissioner of Education and learned that search and seizure information was contained in a position paper prepared by one of the attorneys there. The young staff member got a copy of the paper and sent it to the student requesting the information.

BOOKLET

Student staff members have also developed student rights information, and worked with others to produce *Check It Out: A Guide to Rights and Responsibilities for Massachusetts Students*. It covers rights, what to do if your rights are violated, and resources.

Its authors say that "by using this book, you can help ensure that your rights, and those of your friends, are upheld."

In addition, student staff members work on special projects, and have created service projects for students working with special needs students in schools and in institutions. They have also developed workshops and information papers.

SSC student staff members, who are paid minimum wage for their work, have gained skills from participation in the Centers. An adult advisor believes that the "Student Service Centers have illustrated that high school students, provided a certain type of guidance and adequate resources, are capable of organizing and running a complex educational service organization."

For further information:

Pam Chamberlain
Student Service Center
Bureau of Student Services
182 Tremont Street
Boston, MA 02111

YES CHANGE

The young advocates in Youth Engaged in Social Change, or Y.E.S. Change, hope that by providing information about rights and responsibilities to their peers, they can create an informed body of students who will work with school officials to create a more equitable atmosphere in the New York City schools. The seven youth advocates in the program publish a newsletter, produce a radio show, hold workshops and develop student rights cards and booklets to provide needed information to their peers. An article in their newsletter, *Coalition Chronicle,* begins:

DID YOU KNOW?

You have the right to:

- a free public education until the age of 21
- inspect and get copies of your records
- receive copies of your school handbook
- determine your own dress (without interfering with the orderly operation of the school)
- not salute the flag
- participate in school government

The article goes on to explain: "Many students attending public schools are not aware of their rights and responsibilities. It is essential to know these rights to assure you a suitable education without discrimination."

The youth advocates were brought together by staff at Advocates for Children of New York, who believed that youth with problems in the education system might be particularly able to help other young people with similar difficulties. They anticipated that "a core group of youth will become leaders in their schools and community organizations, and provide short term

training and disseminate information to at least 500 other young people through outreach in high schools and community programs."

RADIO

The youth advocates are paid a stipend for 16 hours of work a week. They work at the project's offices or in the field, making presentations, doing the bi-weekly radio show or attending meetings. In addition, each youth advocate acts as a "consciousness-raiser" in his or her own school during school hours. They are responsible for all aspects of their thirty-minute radio show, called "Youth On the Air." Programs have focused on such issues as the juvenile justice system, graffiti, and the closing of a local hospital.

NEWSLETTER

The *Coalition Chronicle* is also produced entirely by the youth. Articles have discussed the project itself, student rights, health care and draft registration. Similar issues have been discussed during project presentations at schools or community groups.

WORKSHOP

The youth have developed a standard workshop, termed the "traveling road show," that they adapt to each particular setting.

BOOKLET

Their primary focus is education, however, and the youth advocates have placed the most emphasis on their development and distribution of student rights information. They have created both a handy wallet-size card and a booklet for this purpose. They have also negotiated with school system officials to ensure that all students receive such information. And they have held Speak-outs on

NEGOTIATION

Education, in which students from all parts of the city attended workshops and expressed their views of the school system. Recommendations were then presented to school officials.

The project director reports that the project has encountered few problems. It has benefited both its paid youth advocate participants and their peers in the education system. Gains for the participants include improved communication skills, increased exposure to and knowledge of the systems affecting youth, and ability to act as advocates. Says the director:

> When the young people came in six months ago, they had marbles in their mouths. Now they can do hour-and-a-half workshops, talk to a variety of audiences, meet with Board of Education officials and politicians...They didn't have a notion about how to move things and make things happen. Now they do.

For further information:

Kathy Jarvis, Coordinator
Y.E.S. Change
Advocates for Children of New York, Inc.
29-28 41st Avenue
Long Island City, NY 11101

YOUNG WOMEN'S JOURNALISM AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROJECT

The participants in the Young Women's Journalism and Community Education Project hope to raise the consciousness of their peers about the issues that affect them as women and as youth, so they can both work for and live in a more equitable society. They recently published the book *Double Jeopardy: Young and Female in America*; its introduction raises some of the problems they are confronting:

BOOKLET

> While the lives of hundreds of thousands of young women are being ruined by abusive parents, by discriminatory laws and attitudes, by early pregnancies, by prostitution, and by drug abuse, our society is still reacting to them patronizingly and lasciviously...

NEWSPAPER

The young women in the project write, produce and distribute the "High School Women's News Page," a twice-monthly sub-section of a feminist newspaper. They receive training in writing, layout and distribution, and decide on which topics to write, within the broad guidelines of the paper's feminist, youth-oriented position. The "News Page" has covered everything from the availability of birth control to boxing as a possible sport for women.

PUBLIC SPEAKING

Participants also go to local high schools and speak about these issues to journalism, English and sociology classes. Topics at these discussions have included sexuality laws, such as the statutory rape law that applies only to young women, and status offenses, which are of concern to youth also.

WORKSHOPS

Youth Forums organized by the young women and held at a local church and at the project's parent agency provide further community awareness of some of these topics of concern.

The young women in the project meet weekly for comments, discussion and criticism about the project. Every other meeting is used for "business" - questions about

production or distribution. The alternate meetings are rap sessions, called "Creative Solutions Rap Group." These sessions focus on a concern raised by one member, and the others' comments relate to that concern.

Project participants have learned skills and gained confidence they hadn't anticipated. One of the project director's proudest memories is of a young woman discussing her time in the project: "I learned to explore a creativity within myself that I never knew existed."

For further information:

Lisa Cobbs
Center for Women's Studies and Services
908 E Street
San Diego, CA 92101

YOUTH ACTION PROGRAM

The young people in East Harlem's (NY) Youth Action Program are working "to solve the many physical, social, and political problems plaguing them" by informing local and federal policy-makers of their concern, forming an informed youth constituency in their community, and participating in direct change efforts. "Kids have to see what's going on around them and care about changing it," says one participant, describing the philosophy that led to the development of this multi-faceted community improvement program.

There are several different neighborhood Youth Action projects, each with its own climate and emphasis. These projects are held together by the common goal of providing young people with the tools and knowledge to bring about social change; each project is kept informed about the activities of the others during general meetings, which are held on payday.

NEWSLETTER
PUBLIC SPEAKING
WORKSHOPS

The social and political action arm of YAP is the Youth Forum. Its members have participated in a coalition to save a city hospital, published the YAP newsletter, attended rallies and hearings in Washington, D.C., to express their opinions about the draft or federal budget cuts, and developed conferences and workshops on a variety of youth concerns. Along with other YAP projects, the Youth Forum has spawned the East Harlem Youth Congress, which communicates a youth perspective to policy makers on all levels. Several hundred youth have become members since the Congress was created in 1981. The Youth Forum members often worked within the system to gain an understanding of systems like employment or education, and to gain experience in articulating their point of view. The Congress participants aim to bring about local change, such as getting the Board of Education to make it a priority to support alternative schools or ensuring that young people have a voice on local decision-making bodies.

Some of the other YAP projects are:

Youth Action Restoration Crew (YARC), a group of male and female workers who have renovated a four-story building for a variety of community-serving purposes. The youth are trained in all phases of construction and building rehabilitation.

Johnson Youth Patrol, a group of thirty youth who travel around the James Weldon Johnson housing projects at night in order to reduce crime there. They keep in contact with walkie-talkies, and wear jackets identifying themselves as Patrol members. They have developed a good relationship with the Johnson Tenants' Association, and have set up an escort service for the elderly.

We Are Somebody Community Center and Leadership School, located in a youth-renovated school building. The Center serves to promote cultural awareness in the community, presenting shows which explore Black, Puerto Rican and Third World culture, as well as "fun events." The Leadership School is intended as an alternative for those who drop out of high school, and includes study of political awareness, basic math and writing skills, Third World history, tutoring methods, and community organizing.

Homes-Away-From-Home, a core group of youth who seek to create strong alternate home situations for young people who need them. They have explored two forms of alternatives. One is a second family situation, where a teenager has a place to go in addition to his or her own home. The other is a collective living center, where several young people can live with an adult mentor in a warm, humane environment.

YAP has shown that an employment program, or any program involving youth, can be much more than menial tasks or biweekly paychecks. Youth are motivated by the enthusiasm and competence of their friends, and discover their own capabilities. Says a project organizer:

YAP asks youth "What do you like to do? What would you like to change?" Society assumes that young people don't want to do anything...but they have fantastic, amazing ideas.

For further information:

Dorothy Stoneman, Director
Youth Action Program
94 East 111th Street
New York, NY 10029

YOUTH ADVOCACY PROJECT

The young people in the Youth Advocacy Project worked to increase participation by youth in the project's parent agency and in the larger community, and to counteract an attitude described by the director as "youth should be spoken to, but not heard from."

Staff members at Interface Community, a community organization, began to realize how rarely youth input was solicited by those who made policies affecting youth. In addition, when youth input was considered, young people were usually given inadequate training, which led to a frustrating and boring experience for them. The Youth Advocacy Project was planned to counteract this experience.

TRAINING

Two youth staff members were hired at Interface, and they in turn hired twelve young people to make up a Youth Action Team that would look at community and agency problems and create possible solutions. The youth staff members worked with adult staff to train the Team members. And Team members trained adult staff in ways to increase Youth Participation in the agency, by performing a spoof of Star Wars in which an agency in space had roles reversed, and a "token" adult was asked to do all the menial tasks.

PROBLEM-SOLVING

The Youth Action Team also conducted a survey of youth needs in the community, something that had never been done. They discovered that young people tend to turn to their peers for advice, and will even turn to their parents before going to a professional counselor. With this discovery in mind, the Youth Action Team created Youthline, a youth-run hotline for youth in their area. It is staffed from 3 to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Project staff members also hoped to counteract the community's negative attitude toward youth. Community members, however, were discouraged by the failure of other programs to solve such problems as juvenile delinquency, so they were ready to accept the possibility of youth involvement in solving problems.

One Youth Action Team solution began with the statewide Conference on Children and Youth, in 1980. Several Team members were trained by the project director in lobbying techniques and did research on various political issues. Three Team members accompanied the director to the conference. At conference workshops, Team members advocated more youth participation on policy-making bodies.

PUBLIC SPEAKING

Two Youth Action Team members were chosen to be among twenty-two conference delegates to testify before the State Senate Select Committee on Children and Youth. One of the Team members brought to these hearings his idea of mandated youth positions on each California county's mandated Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Commission. The Senate Committee passed his idea, and there is now a state law requiring that two of the fifteen members of each Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Commission be youth.

Another Team member helped write a proposal to fund a statewide Youth Network. And youth staff members regularly attend meetings of local governing bodies. The original Youth Action Team helped to hire a "second generation" Team, who are primarily involved with running Youthline.

Team members meet for several hours once a week to discuss their work and receive additional training. Edward Heidig, the project coordinator, points out that adults who are involved in this sort of project must anticipate the needs of the young people without imposing an agenda on the group. "Adults may want to move more quickly to accomplish an advocacy goal that is clear to them," he explains, "but you have to give the young people time to work things out so their goals take priority."

For further information:

Joan Schwartz
Interface Community
3475 Old Conejo Road, Suite C-5
Newbury Park, CA 91320

YOUTH COMMUNICATION/NEW YORK CENTER

NEWSPAPER

Fifty New York City youth write, edit and publish the newspaper *New Youth Connections* "to inform adults about the feelings and concerns of young people so their needs will be more fully understood when policies are planned and implemented." These youth form one center of Youth Communication, a national organization that articulates young people's concerns for a youth audience. In addition, the six centers of Youth Communication are creating an informed constituency of youth by publishing newspapers or producing radio shows. The young staff members for *New Youth Connections* hope to "create a feeling of responsibility and participation in city life among youth...so they will work to change society so it better meets the needs of children and young people."

All the youth staff members are volunteers, though some receive school credit for their work (as part of a school-related internship program) because they undergo extensive training in editing, writing, layout and photography. The editorial staff meets twice a week--once with adults and once without--to discuss potential stories. The editors assign the stories to reporters who do the research and the writing. Other students edit, proofread, layout the finished copy and even distribute the printed paper. Articles have covered such subjects as unemployment, teen pregnancy and public transportation.

At every stage, the emphasis is on quality. Keith Hefner, one of two adult advisors, believes it's important to demand professionalism from the young people. The paper's 40,000 readers, which include school administrators, parents and other adults, will take young people more seriously if the paper is first-rate. In addition, the newspaper is a demanding project, so if the results are poor, the young people won't stick with it.

The young people who do stay with *New Youth Connections* become more confident and capable. "They have a real sense of how you go about accomplishing something," says Hefner, "how to plan, how to start and end, how to resolve strong opinions, how to present yourself well. They know nothing happens by itself, but that you can have influence if you get in and do it."

For further information:

Keith Hefner
Youth Communication/New York Center
29 West 21st STreet, 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10010

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING PROJECT

Participants in the Youth Development and Training Project think that Black youth can have a beneficial influence on the quality and condition of their lives, if they are provided with effective support and training. The project was developed by the Urban League of Portland, Oregon, to prepare young people to participate in their communities by having them serve on community boards. When staff members of the Urban League realized that the youth in their community needed more help and more year-round activities than were available from seasonal jobs that offered little training, they reorganized the agency to include a unit for youth development and training, and planned a year-round project to involve young people in tutoring, employment skills development, counseling, or advocacy.

RESEARCH

During their intensive training period, young people are paid to meet for two hours every day after school. They research community agencies by visiting meetings, inviting agency directors to speak and studying the issues on which they take stands. The youth also stage mock meetings, develop testimony for public hearings and work on communication skills. Towards the end of the training, each young person selects an agency he or she would like to serve. An adult coordinator contacts agency board members to explain that the purpose of the program is active involvement by the young person. In most cases, the boards are supportive and the young person is accepted into membership after making a speech describing his or her qualifications.

The young people take board membership very seriously. "You have to be on time and act responsibly," says one youth. "Otherwise, they'll just think this is another stupid teenager." The fact that the young people are knowledgeable about the questions facing the board impresses adult members. "Adults are surprised that we know about the issues," says one youngster. "We know what we're talking about." Finally, through the activities of the young people

in the program, other young people are also beginning to think about themselves as part of the community. "Other kids hear you're going to a board meeting and they start telling you things to tell the board," explains one young participant. "That's good, because you get more ideas. You really can't think up all this stuff yourself."

For further information:

Norm Monroe, Deputy Director
The Urban League of Portland
404 Community Service Center
718 West Burnside
Portland, OR 97209

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM/ NORTHWEST BRONX COMMUNITY AND CLERGY COALITION

PROBLEM-SOLVING

The young people who have become a major force in the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition know that they can make a beneficial impact on their community by informing program planners and funders of youth concerns, monitoring their efforts, and organizing other youth to work with adults on programs that improve parks and housing.

> One Youth Organizer and the area young people convinced the Parks Department to give them the key to the Park House so they could take care of the maintenance of the local park. They cleaned up the park and it stayed clean: 'Nobody broke a bottle after that,' because they knew they'd have the young people to contend with if they did.

Such incidents are not uncommon since the Community and Clergy Coalition created the Youth Development Program. It began because of community concern about gangs; YDP's approach is to mobilize a "gang" to redirect their energies to improve the community and help themselves.

Since 1976, young people at YDP have been involved in tenant and youth organizing, building rehabilitation, youth employment, working for funds and programs benefiting youth, and monitoring the efforts of agencies and government on behalf of youth. Major programs focusing on advocacy since YDP's inception include Youth Organizers, Youth Committees, and the Youth Community Conservation and Improvement Corps (YCCIP).

TRAINING

Youth Organizers are young adults, ages 20-28, whose job is to involve teenagers in athletic, educational and community events. Typical activities that neighborhood youth have organized with the help of Youth Organizers include sports leagues and tournaments; clearing parks

and creating recreation areas; planting community gardens; developing portable activities like swim mobiles, skate mobiles, and film mobiles; making up baskets of food and clothes for families at Thanksgiving; and pressuring city officials and local facilities to provide and upgrade play areas.

MONITORING

Adults and youth serve on the Youth Committee, which meets monthly. They work for funds, make sure the local Planning Board goes after all available youth employment and recreation money, and educate community members about issues affecting young people. They protested a change in the eligibility criteria for a city-funded jobs program, for instance, because they felt the change would penalize young people who wanted to stay in school but needed jobs. Members also convinced the Borough President to create two new positions in his office: a liaison for youth affairs and a liaison to the Department of Employment.

Although the Community Improvement program is no longer in existence, its work in the Northwest Bronx serves as a model for present-day programs. Under this program, 16-19 year-old youth organized tenants and young people and rehabilitated buildings. Their work was based on the Alinsky model, in which tenant organizers begin with one building, then move to include the block, the neighborhoods, and finally a large coalition of neighborhoods. The youth, called Junior Organizers, were each paired with an adult Senior Organizer.

Many of the young people in the Youth Development Program progress from assisting in creating a sports tournament in their own neighborhood to serving on one of ten neighborhood Youth Committees to becoming a member of the agency's Youth Committee. Through their participation, they gain skills as organizers and advocates, and receive job training, connection to jobs, and support to stay in school. And the goal for all phases of the program is the same. "We want to get young people involved in every level of decision-making," says the program director, "beginning with definition of the issue, formulation and implementation of strategies, and a resolution."

For further information:

John Toomey, Assistant Director
Youth Development Program
Northwest Bronx Community and
Clergy Coalition
2721 Webster Avenue
Bronx, NY 11230

YOUTH NEWS

RADIO

The young reporters in Oakland, California, comprise another of the Youth Communication centers (p. 57) and have adopted the goals of informing adults of youth concerns, articulating those concerns for youth and creating a youth constituency. They have created, in a weekly radio show called "Youth on the Air," a "forum in which youth issues could be articulated and young people themselves could be involved in the process." The founder, Louis Freedberg, chose to use radio because he hoped to provide an alternative to the material available on radio for youth and thought he could capitalize on the mass communication that radio provides. As one participant describes it, "It's a big soapbox you can get up and shout on."

He recruited students through high schools and youth employment programs, and continues to recruit new reporters three times a year. The young reporters begin with simultaneous training and "hands-on" reporting. The two to three month training provides the youth with the basics of radio and communication, including interviewing techniques, use of cassette recorders, tape editing, writing for broadcast, on-air training, and even assertive use of the telephone.

As the youth develop their skills, they work more and more independently, until staff members feel they are able to complete a story on their own. Once a reporter is able to work independently, he or she is responsible for choosing story ideas, deciding on a story angle, and for all phases of producing a story. In addition, the young people critique the program each week and discuss changes to be made, such as a new introduction. The show is syndicated, and can be heard on public radio stations across the country. Each of the weekly "Youth on the Air" programs has a topical focus; shows have focused on such issues as young people in step-families, military recruiting in high schools, and bilingual education.

Besides drawing public attention to youth concerns, "Youth on the Air" has expanded the skills of its young reporters and has given them new confidence. One remarked, "I never thought I'd be doing news," and another added, "It's an ego trip...hearing yourself on the air."

For further information:

Louis Freedberg, Director
Youth News
1419 Broadway, Suite 433
Oakland, CA 94612